

## Comparative Analysis of the Structure & Content of Paintings on the Theme of World War I. vs Iranian Sacred Defense

### Abstract

War and devastation are recurrent subjects of the artworks created by artists of different ages and geography. Since ancient times to date, great literary works and masterpieces of music, film and theater have been created on the theme of war. Basically, art of war is a special genre full of conflicts and contradictions between good and evil. It is the expression of the concept of warfare and defending homeland, identity and belief in different doctrines and records the visual aspects of war to show human's pain and grief. The aftermaths of the eight years of armed conflict left a profound and lasting effect on the Iranian people's hearts and souls. The occupation of their soil by aggressive forces, the extensive use of chemical weapons and rockets and deliberate attacks on civilian targets had lots of casualties. A large number of people were martyred or displaced and many cities were ruined. Moreover, many sacrifices were made by hundreds of thousands of Iranian youth and veterans who struggled to defend their homeland and its independence and triumphed to repel the enemy out of their country, all leading the war artists to register these unfortunate events. The young artists depicting scenes of the eight-year, Iran-Iraq war and sacred defense consider it their duty to create artworks which express their revolutionary beliefs. As observers of the war devastations who had not suffered its trauma, these

artists create artworks that exhibit idealist features. These pieces of art are of an ideal and mystical nature rather than a realist, violent and militant one. These emotionally created pieces are typically slogan works, devoid of strong artistic structure. Furthermore, they are largely based on Islamic beliefs and strive to reflect the Iranian society's feelings and sentiments. On the other hand, there are the paintings of World War I, snapshots of which are expressionist in style offering a realistic account of people's agony and suffering because its artists had direct association with war and warfare as soldiers. Conducted through desk study of library resources and the examining the respective images in war museums, the article aims to make a comparative analysis of the works created by two different streams of thought and belief systems of Iran-Iraq and the World War I in two periods of militancy to defense. The paper seeks to answer these very questions that what are the commonalities and differences in the contents, style and structure of artworks of these two periods?

Via analyzing and reviewing the data gathered from war museums and comparing them, it was hypothesized that within the common themes of the artworks of these two different eras, there are structural differences in their contents and concepts which are rooted in two perspectives on war and defense.

The paper comes to this conclusion that although the majority of the revolutionary artists of that era were young people who lacked sufficient experience in art and were often unknown in the artistic community, but they endeavored to create a new style of painting in the history of Iranian art. The revolutionary and defensive outlook of war artists was stronger than

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their artistic knowledge and style. Consequently, artists were more concerned about the message their works conveyed and less about their structure and credibility. On the contrary, artists of the World War I, who had fought in war trenches and frontlines, created realistic paintings reflecting the actual trauma of war.

**Keywords:** Art of War, Sacred Defense Painting, Propaganda, World War I, Content, Structure

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